



2001: A Science Odyssey and Expo

The Idaho National Engineering and Environmental Laboratory (INEEL), in conjunction with the Idaho Science Teachers Association (ISTA), hosted 2001: A Science Odyssey and Exposition, on October 3 – 5 in Idaho Falls. The annual meeting of the ISTA on those dates in Idaho Falls presented a superb opportunity for the INEEL to strengthen its ties with ISTA and at the same time, to promote science and science education in a series of special events.

Dr. Robert Ballard, world famous undersea explorer, discoverer of the **RMS Titanic**, and founder of the JASON Education Foundation, held the community spellbound during his keynote address. During the annual meeting, ISTA members enjoyed an odyssey of science and technology presentations, as well as, many science-based field trips. A special recognition and awards reception was held for teachers, students, and INEEL scientists who made important contributions to science and technology during the year.

The INEEL hosted what turned out to be a kid-winning Science Expo on Expo Day. More than 700 K-12 teachers and 2,500 students, parents, and members of the community came to the Expo. Practicing scientists and engineers from engineering and technology organizations, university faculty and teachers from academic institutions, and representatives from community groups simultaneously exhibited, demonstrated, and presented on the Expo floor. The Expo offering was diverse, as indicated by these activities: women in science forum, chemistry magic shows, slide shows by NASA personnel, glass blowing, hands-on experience with surgical technology, and nuclear fission demonstrations. Rockets flew and robots ran. Students were given passports that were stamped as they visited the exhibits and activities on the Expo floor. Four hours was the estimated average time students took to complete a passport. They were engaged and lost track of time. Nine hundred one students completed evaluation of the Expo. **Evaluation data** revealed that twenty-one percent said they liked “everything” the best. But most helpful was the indication that the types of exhibits that held most student interest correlated with the exhibits a team of adult judges selected for awards. Within the framework of the exposition, adult and student perceptions were similar. Student interest was exhibited most highly in the following: robotics technology, technology transfer, safety, energy, environmental education, and chemistry. These areas support the mission of the laboratory and correlate with many INEEL programs and competencies.

2001: A Science Odyssey and Expo was a multifaceted, exciting, and important three-day event for the INEEL and area communities. Co-chairs were Elda D. Zounar (INEEL) and Laura Eder (ISTA Past President).